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# Background, analysis, and performance guide for Edison Denisov's Sonata for flute and piano

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BACKGROUND, ANALYSIS, AND PERFORMANCE GUIDE  
FOR EDISON DENISOV'S  
SONATA FOR FLUTE AND PIANO

A Written Document

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the  
Louisiana State University and  
Agricultural and Mechanical College  
in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Musical Arts

in

The School of Music

by  
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I thank C. F. Peters Corporation for permission to use examples of Denisov's *Sonata for Flute and Piano* in my document. © C. F. Peters Corporation. All Rights Reserved. Used by permission.

I am extremely grateful to all the friends, colleagues, and students who cheered me on, prayed for me, or lent an ear or a hand: Gabriela Chihaescu, Amanda Barrett, Ed and Pam Dunbar, Darren Lawson, Rebekah Pringle, my church family, BJU family, and the entire LSU flute studio. To my previous teacher Dr. Tadeu Coelho I am very much indebted for his practical flute wisdom and his example to me of enthusiasm and creativity.

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Finally and ultimately, I offer up a grateful song of praise and thanksgiving to God, whose grace has saved me, whose wisdom teaches me, and whose power will continue to strengthen me for each task He appoints for me. *Soli Deo gloria.*

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## ABSTRACT

After composer Edison Vasilievich Denisov (1929–1996) finished his graduate work at the Moscow Conservatoire, he launched into an independent examination of composers whose music had been banned by the Soviet authorities during his conservatory years (1951–1959). It was during this time in his compositional development that he composed his *Sonata for Flute and Piano* (1960). The first section of this document provides a biographical summary of Edison Denisov and the circumstances surrounding the composition of the flute sonata. The second section is devoted to formal, harmonic, and stylistic analysis of the sonata. The final section of the document provides a guide for performing and teaching the piece, and includes information for available audio recordings.

## INTRODUCTION

Edison Vasilievich Denisov (1929–1996) was a Russian composer who, since the 1991 dissolution of the Soviet Union, has become a recurring topic of musicological research, since details about his life and music are now more readily accessible.<sup>1</sup> Denisov's compositional output includes a substantial amount of chamber music, and he made significant contributions to the wind instrument repertoire, including several flute compositions.

This paper is organized into three interrelated sections. Beginning with a section devoted to the background of the *Sonata for Flute and Piano*, I introduce the composer, the circumstances in which he lived, and the events leading up to his composition of the sonata in 1960. This background material informs to a significant extent the second section which focuses on formal, harmonic, and stylistic analysis of the music itself. The third section ties together the first two sections in a practical way, offering a performance guide and observations about available recordings of the sonata.

My sources include the book *Edison Denisov: the Russian Voice in European New Music* by Yuri Kholopov and Valeria Tsenova, which gives a detailed analysis of the particulars of Denisov's compositional philosophy, style, and techniques, as well as thorough biographical information.<sup>2</sup> This book is an expanded edition of the authors' 1995 work *Edison Denisov*, though not explicitly identified as such. The 2002 edition completes the information leading up to the composer's death in 1996. Peter Schmelz is another scholar in Soviet musicology, whose recent

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<sup>1</sup> Notable authors of post-1991 research include Yuri Kholopov and Valeria Tsenova (2002), Peter Schmelz (2009), Zachary Cairns (2010), and Brian Luce (2000); their research is cited in this paper. Other recent dissertations include William Bruce Curlette, "New Music for Unaccompanied Clarinet by Soviet Composers" (D.M.A. diss., The Ohio State University, 1991); Shannon Leigh Wettstein, "Surviving the Soviet Era: An Analysis of Works by Shostakovich, Schnittke, Denisov, and Ustvolskaya" (D.M.A. diss., University of California at San Diego, 2000); and Ora Paul Haar, "The Influence of Jazz Elements on Edison Denisov's 'Sonata for Alto Saxophone and Piano,'" (D.M.A. diss., The University of Texas at Austin, 2004).

<sup>2</sup> Yuri Kholopov and Valeria Tsenova, *Edison Denisov: the Russian Voice in European New Music*, trans. Romela Kohanovskaya (Berlin: Kuhn, 2002).

book *Such Freedom, If Only Musical: Unofficial Soviet Music during the Thaw*,<sup>3</sup> based on his Ph.D. dissertation, describes the circumstances and society under which Denisov and others received conservatory education and matured as composers. Boris Schwarz's *Music and Musical Life in Soviet Russia* offers a comprehensive overview for the years 1917–1981, narrating not only the major historical and musical events, but also the underlying influences and feelings.<sup>4</sup> From this book I gleaned information about the Moscow Conservatoire's curriculum and facilities, conditions that would have been experienced by Edison Denisov as a student and subsequently as a professor. Levon Hakobian's *Music in the Soviet Age: 1917–1987* is especially helpful for its chronological table in the back material, spanning over 100 pages in its coverage of compositions and significant events listed by year.<sup>5</sup> *Soviet Socialist Realism: Origins and Theory*, by C. Vaughan James, provides extensive excerpts from the 1960 edition of a Soviet publication, *Bases of Marxist-Leninist Aesthetics*.<sup>6</sup> This book gives specific insight into the reigning philosophy for the arts during Denisov's time.

Two recent dissertations also provide insight into Denisov scholarship and served as models for my study. Zachary Cairns' work examines three serial compositions from Denisov's mature style period, and though the 1960 flute sonata at hand does not possess all of the attributes of those later works, Cairns' dissertation provided a good pattern to follow.<sup>7</sup> Brian Luce's dissertation on Denisov's *Quatre pièces pour flûte et piano* (1977) is the only flute-specific research I have located, and it includes some brief comments on the 1960 flute sonata.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Peter Schmelz, *Such Freedom, If Only Musical: Unofficial Soviet Music during the Thaw* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

<sup>4</sup> Boris Schwarz, *Music and Musical Life in Soviet Russia: Enlarged Edition, 1917–1981* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1983).

<sup>5</sup> Levon Hakobian, *Music of the Soviet Age: 1917–1987* (Stockholm, Sweden: Melos Music Literature and Kantat HB, 1998).

<sup>6</sup> C. Vaughan James, *Soviet Socialist Realism: Origins and Theory* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1973).

<sup>7</sup> Zachary A. Cairns, "Multiple-Row Serialism in Three Works by Edison Denisov" (Ph.D. diss., University of Rochester, 2010).

<sup>8</sup> Brian Luce, "Light from Behind the Iron Curtain: Anti-Collectivist Style in Edison Denisov's '*Quatre pièces pour flûte et piano*'" (DMA diss., University of North Texas, 2000).



## SECTION 1: BACKGROUND

### 1.1 EARLY YEARS

When radio physicist Vasily Grigoryevich Denisov bestowed the unusual name Edison on his son, he did so in honor of the American inventor Thomas Edison (1847–1931).<sup>9</sup> The boy's middle name was based on the patronymic tradition of adopting his father's name, thus Vasilievich.<sup>10</sup> Edik, as he was known to family and friends, was born on April 6, 1929. His parents lived in Tomsk, a town hailed as “the Siberian Athens” because of its position as the prominent educational center of Siberia. His mother, Antonina Ivanovna Titova, studied and then worked in the medical department of Tomsk University.<sup>11</sup>

Young Edik excelled in mathematics, physics, and chemistry, took up several musical instruments on his own, and enrolled in the Tomsk University's Physics & Mathematics Department in 1946. While studying mathematics, he simultaneously attended Tomsk's Music College for piano instruction and music classes. He even tried his hand at composing, though Tomsk lacked a composition teacher. His early pieces included piano preludes, art songs, and a mini-opera. In 1950 he received his diploma and music education credentials from the music college.<sup>12</sup>

Denisov found himself at a crossroads, torn between a career in mathematics and a desire to pursue additional training in musical composition. Needing some evaluation of the quality of his pieces, he began corresponding with Dmitri Shostakovich, who agreed to look over his work. Shostakovich wrote to Denisov in 1950,

“Dear Edik, your compositions have astonished me. . . . I believe that you are endowed with a great gift for composition. And it would be a great sin to bury your talent. Of course, to become a composer, you have a lot to learn.”<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> “Thomas Alva Edison Biography,” *The Thomas Edison Papers* (Rutgers University, February 2, 2012), <http://edison.rutgers.edu/biography.htm> (accessed 28 March 2013).

<sup>10</sup> His middle initial completed, perhaps intentionally, a tidy anagram – Edison V. Denisov.

<sup>11</sup> Kholopov and Tsenova, *Denisov* 2002, 1.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 270 (correspondence dated March 22, 1950).

Shostakovich shared some insightful comments on the *oeuvre* Denisov had sent him, being honest yet encouraging. He recommended that Denisov apply to the Moscow Conservatoire, but simultaneously advised him to finish his mathematics degree. “If you have just one year to go before you graduate from the university, then finish it. The composer’s path is thorny.”<sup>14</sup>

Denisov’s initial attempt to apply to the Conservatoire was unsuccessful because of his insufficient background in music theory. After graduating with honors from Tomsk University in 1951, with a specialty in functional analysis, he traveled to Moscow to persist in study and preparation for a second attempt to apply to the Conservatoire. He finally achieved satisfactory results on the entrance exams and enrolled as a composition student in the summer of 1951.

## 1.2 MOSCOW CONSERVATOIRE

The atmosphere at the Moscow Conservatoire was quite authoritarian at the time, due to the regulations set up by the government during the Soviet Era. Soviet leader Joseph Stalin (1879–1953) and the Communist Party had established Socialist Realism as the official position and philosophy for all the arts. Socialist Realism promoted Soviet doctrine and ideals through depictions of “heroic” common workers and their everyday lives. This artistic movement denounced non-representational forms of art and rejected the new abstract trends of the West. Musicologist Marina Frolova-Walker explains, “Good Socialist Realist artists were to depict the world as it was seen through *partiynost*’ (Party consciousness), with a view to the ‘glorious future.’”<sup>15</sup> A Soviet publication titled *Bases of Marxist-Leninist Aesthetics* (1960) explained that the essence of *partiynost*’ was “the open allegiance of art to the cause of the working class, a conscious decision on the part of the artist to dedicate his work to the furtherance of socialism.”<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid, 272 (correspondence dated April 5, 1950).

<sup>15</sup> Marina Frolova-Walker, *Russian Music and Nationalism: From Glinka to Stalin* (New Have, CT: Yale University Press, 2007), 312.

<sup>16</sup> Quoted in C. Vaughan James, *Soviet Socialist Realism: Origins and Theory* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1973), 13. In this book James includes extensive excerpts from the Soviet publication *Bases of Marxist-Leninist Aesthetics* (1960).

Art for art's sake, which failed to be "accessible to the people, both by its content and in its aesthetic value,"<sup>17</sup> was associated with the bourgeois view that "good art is always intelligible only to an elite."<sup>18</sup> Soviet Socialist Realism embraced instead the concept of *narodnost'* (people-ness), an aesthetic principle in which art must serve the people as a whole:<sup>19</sup> "No degree of talent will produce a genuine work of art unless the artist is guided by what is vital to society, that is, unless his work is rooted in the life of the people."<sup>20</sup> For composers, this position meant that their music had to be "optimistic, aspiring to heroic exhilaration," and meeting the requirements of "accessibility, tunefulness, stylistic traditionalism, and folk-inspired qualities."<sup>21</sup> Compositions with text or pictorial programmatic elements, including choral music and operas, were preferred and promoted over the absolute symphonic style, which could not contain as much perceptible "meaning."<sup>22</sup>

Cultural official Andrey Zhdanov (1896–1948) led the way in imposing severe regulations on art, literature, and music, a crackdown which came to be known as *Zhdanovshchina*.<sup>23</sup> A resolution was passed in 1948 by the Central Committee of the Communist Party, under the guidance of Zhdanov, denouncing music which represented a "formalist and cosmopolitan bowing down before the corrupt bourgeois West."<sup>24</sup>

Formalism, as defined by Soviet officials, was "'the cult of atonality, dissonance, and disharmony,' the rejection of melody, and the involvement with the 'confused, neuro-pathological combinations that transform music into cacophony, into a chaotic conglomeration of

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 4-5.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 4.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 4.

<sup>21</sup> Laurel Fay, *Shostakovich: A Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 89.

<sup>22</sup> Boris Schwarz, *Music and Musical Life in Soviet Russia: Enlarged Edition, 1917–1981* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1983), 220-221.

<sup>23</sup> Schmelz, *Such Freedom*, 8.

<sup>24</sup> Kholopov and Tsenova, *Denisov* 2002, 7.

sounds.”<sup>25</sup> Musicologist Boris Schwarz observes that “the official drive against ‘formalism’ (i.e. modernism), the simplistic stress on tunefulness and accessibility, elevated musical insipidness to a status symbol.”<sup>26</sup> He summarizes,

“The fallacy of Soviet aesthetics—in the narrow interpretation of Stalin and Zhdanov—is not so much that ‘art must be understandable by the people,’ but that *all* art must be understood by *all* the people. That is an impossibility unless art is brought down to the lowest common denominator. The ultimate goal is to raise the people’s receptivity to great art, and significant progress has been made in the Soviet Union to bring art closer to the people. But that goal cannot, and should not, be made the yardstick for the creative efforts of an entire nation.”<sup>27</sup>

The condemnation of “formalism” had a significant impact on the repertoire allowed for study in the USSR’s music conservatories. Prominent composers Dmitri Shostakovich, Sergei Prokofiev, Aram Khachaturian, Vissarion Shebalin, Gavriil Popov, and Nikolai Miaskovsky were among those whose music was included in the resolution’s censure.<sup>28</sup> Hungarian composer Béla Bartók and Germany’s Paul Hindemith and Arnold Schoenberg were mentioned as well.<sup>29</sup> In February 1948, in the wake of the 1948 resolution, Dmitri Shostakovich spoke to the participants of a music conference in Moscow:

“I know that the Party is showing concern for Soviet art and for me, a Soviet composer. . . I will try again and again to create symphonic works that are comprehensible and accessible to the people, from the standpoint of their ideological content, musical language and form. I will work ever more diligently on the musical embodiment of images of the heroic Russian people.”<sup>30</sup>

Though the death of Joseph Stalin in 1953 ushered in somewhat of a “Thaw,” under the new leadership of Nikita Khrushchev (1894–1971), Soviet officials were still firmly rooted in Socialist Realism. Denisov asked Shostakovich whether he thought that changes for the better were in store for them, and the reply was simply, “Edik, the times are new, but the informers are

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<sup>25</sup> Schwarz, *Musical Life*, 220.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 242.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 245.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 219.

<sup>29</sup> Kholopov and Tsenova, *Denisov* 2002, 7.

<sup>30</sup> Quoted in Fay, *Shostakovich: A Life*, 160.

still the same.”<sup>31</sup> Denisov’s classmate Sofia Gubaidulina recalled raids by the Moscow Conservatoire authorities on the student dormitories, searching for contraband musical scores.<sup>32</sup> Other composers, while not officially banned, were merely brushed aside in lecturers’ passing comments:

“Here comrades we have the Austrian composer Mahler. He was born in 1860 and died in 1911. He was the main conductor of opera in Prague, Hamburg, and Vienna. In Vienna he was also the main conductor of the Philharmonic. He wrote ten symphonies and five symphonic vocal cycles. This composer was reactionary, bourgeois and static. Now we turn to Richard Strauss.”<sup>33</sup>

Not surprisingly, the curriculum was strongly biased in favor of Russian music of the past generations, including Mikhail Glinka, Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov, and Modest Mussorgsky.

The Conservatoire facilities lent themselves easily to the tight control of the Soviet regime. At the small, cramped music library, reference books were not found on shelves available to the students; rather, call slips had to be filled out to obtain them.<sup>34</sup> Using the music library’s phonograph recordings entailed special procedures, even for faculty members. When a teacher needed music for his class lecture, he would file the requests ahead of time, and the phonographs would be taken to the central playback room. The classrooms did not have turntables, but were equipped with loudspeakers wired to the playback room. The teacher would communicate by telephone when he was ready for the musical examples to be played.<sup>35</sup>

Some professors at the Conservatoire were more sympathetic to new music, and secretly provided scores of forbidden music to their students. Denisov’s primary composition teacher, the composer Vissarion Shebalin (1902–1963), sought to educate his students using the widest scope

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<sup>31</sup> Kholopov and Tsenova, *Denisov* 2002, 8.

<sup>32</sup> Schmelz, *Such Freedom*, 30.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 30 (quoted reminiscence of Nikolai Karetnikov, who was three years ahead of Denisov at the Moscow Conservatoire).

<sup>34</sup> Schwarz, *Musical Life*, 383.

<sup>35</sup> Schwarz, *Musical Life*, 384.

of music possible. In his classes he covered music by Bach, Handel, Haydn, Mozart, Schubert, Brahms, Mahler, Tchaikovsky, Glazunov, Beethoven, Glinka, Rimsky-Korsakov, Mussorgsky, and Debussy. His students listened to recordings of Prokofiev's and Shostakovich's music banned from performance, and studied manuscript copies of Shostakovich symphonies. Since Shebalin was able to acquire recordings abroad, he exposed his students to the forbidden sounds of Stravinsky, Hindemith, Schoenberg, Berg, Honegger, Dallapiccola and Petrassi.<sup>36</sup> It is probable that these secret listenings took place outside the Conservatoire walls, perhaps at Shebalin's home. Shebalin himself had been terminated in 1948 from his position of Conservatoire director, but was reinstated as a composition professor in 1951, the same year Denisov entered the Conservatoire. Suspicion continued to follow Shebalin, yet loyal students refused to betray him even when questioned by investigating officials from the Union of Soviet Composers.<sup>37</sup>

Shebalin steered Denisov away from imitation, especially that of Shostakovich, helping him to develop his own ideas. In addition to his composition instruction from Shebalin, Denisov sat in on composition classes of Aram Khachaturyan, Heinrich Neuhaus, and Nikolai Peiko, at Shebalin's encouragement. Denisov also studied orchestration with Nikolai Rakov, theory with Viktor Zuckerman, and piano with Vladimir Belov.<sup>38</sup>

The students of the Moscow Conservatoire were encouraged to participate in folkloristic expeditions to various regions of the Soviet Union. Denisov took part in three such endeavors during his student years. His first trip was to the Kursk region, during the summer of 1954. The following two summers took him to the Altai region and his hometown Tomsk region, respectively. On these expeditions Denisov and his fellow students became acquainted with a variety of regional melodies and folksongs, which they were able to preserve in notated form. Denisov's

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<sup>36</sup> Kholopov and Tsenova, *Denisov* 2002, 9.

<sup>37</sup> Schmelz, *Such Freedom*, 32.

<sup>38</sup> Kholopov and Tsenova, *Denisov* 2002, 10.

exposure to this folk tradition found expression in some of his compositions, notably the opera *Ivan the Soldier* and the vocal-instrumental cycle *Pleurs*.<sup>39</sup> Regarding *Ivan the Soldier*, composed during 1956–1959, Denisov commented,

“Once I bought from a second-hand bookseller an old and thick edition of Afanasyev’s fairy tales and became engrossed in reading. One of these tales made the basis of my opera. I wrote the libretto myself, which was quite a difficult task, for there were just three pages in Afanasyev’s tale. I had to add a lot of text, including even some of my own verse and many texts from folkloric records. There are no citations in this opera. I have always shared Bartók’s attitude to folklore: it should be studied and admired but never exploited and spoilt by arrangements.”<sup>40</sup>

In 1956, Denisov received a degree in composition from the Moscow Conservatoire, and commenced his post-graduate studies. He was also accepted as a member of the Union of Soviet Composers, whose purpose was to “unite composers . . . in order to produce ideologically sound music that would speak to all of the peoples of the USSR.”<sup>41</sup> This professional organization provided material aid to composers through the funding source known as Muzfond. Benefits included stipends, loans, housing, medical care, travel grants, practical services such as score copying, and access to comfortable resort getaways for intense concentration upon their creative work.<sup>42</sup> However, the distribution of these resources was often tainted by subjectivity and favoritism and the organization was marked by chronic fiscal indiscipline.<sup>43</sup> As a member of the Union of Soviet Composers, Denisov most likely received some, if not all, of the associated benefits. Closely affiliated with the Union of Soviet Composers was the Copyright Administration, which issued copyright protection and managed issues pertaining to the composers’ royalties when their works were performed.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 11.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 17.

<sup>41</sup> Kiril Tomoff, *Creative Union: The Professional Organization of Soviet Composers, 1939–1953* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2006), 26.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 219.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 233.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 227.

A significant event occurred in 1958 during the “Thaw” under Khrushchev. The Central Committee of the Communist Party issued a resolution, the objective of which was the “correction of the errors” of the 1948 resolution.<sup>45</sup> This 1958 resolution admitted there had been “unjust and unjustifiably sharp criticism” of prominent individual composers in the 1948 resolution.<sup>46</sup> In theory this seemed like a tremendous step forward for the Soviet musical scene, yet in truth this 1958 resolution failed to apologize for or rectify the errors to which it admitted. Schwarz elaborates,

“While the 1958 decree acknowledged the excesses of the past, it stopped far short of nullifying the decree of 1948. On the contrary, great care was taken to point out that the 1948 decisions ‘had played, on the whole, a positive role in the subsequent development of Soviet music.’ There was renewed emphasis on the ‘inviolability of the fundamental principles expressed in the Party decrees on ideological questions.’”<sup>47</sup>

An article published in *Pravda*, the Central Committee’s official newspaper, gave confirmation that the principles of the 1948 Resolution had been correct, acknowledging merely that the criticism of the composers and music under examination had been “unjustifiably severe.” The 1958 *Pravda* article issued caution against “indiscriminate rehabilitation of all the works justly criticized.”<sup>48</sup> Thus the 1958 Resolution facilitated an improved relationship with Soviet composers as well as an improved reputation of Soviet music in the eyes of international onlookers, while avoiding any true retraction of Zhdanov’s ideological decrees.

### 1.3 COMPOSER AND TEACHER

Upon Denisov’s completion of graduate studies in 1959, he embarked on an independent study of composers whose music he felt warranted his attention. Freed from the stifling restrictions of the Moscow Conservatoire, he studied the music of Stravinsky, Bartók, Hindemith,

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<sup>45</sup> Kholopov and Tsenova, *Denisov* 2002, 8.

<sup>46</sup> Schwarz, *Musical Life*, 220.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 311-312.

<sup>48</sup> Schwarz, *Musical Life*, 312.



Debussy, Schoenberg, and Webern.<sup>49</sup> Simultaneously, Denisov took up a teaching post at the Moscow Conservatoire.

The *Sonata for Flute and Piano* was composed in 1960 as Denisov was experimenting with these new styles and techniques. Figure 1 lists several pieces written by other composers around this same time.

COMPOSER	WORK	DATE WRITTEN	NOTES
Messiaen, Olivier	<i>Le Merle Noir</i> for flute and piano	1952	
Volkonsky, Andrei	<i>Musica Stricta</i> for piano	1956	regarded as “the first Soviet twelve-tone composition” <sup>50</sup>
Poulenc, Francis	<i>Sonata for Flute and Piano</i>	1957	
Berio, Luciano	<i>Sequenza I</i> for solo flute	1958	spacial notation, serialism, extended techniques
Cage, John	<i>Variations I</i>	1958	indeterminacy; “for any number of performers, any kind and number of instruments”
Gordeli, Otar	<i>Concertino for Flute and Orchestra</i>	1958–59	
Stockhausen, Karl	<i>Kontakte</i>	1958–59	electronic sounds plus live instruments
Krenek, Ernst	<i>Flute Piece in Nine Phases</i> for flute and piano	1959	extended techniques such as harmonics, whistle tones, and flutter-tongue
Shostakovich, Dmitri	<i>String Quartets Nos. 7 and 8</i>	1960	
Kabalevsky, Dmitri	<i>Spring</i> (Symphonic Poem), op. 65	1960	
Sviridov, Georgy	<i>Songs about Lenin</i> , for bass, mixed chorus and orchestra	1960	
Cage, John	<i>Variations II</i>	1961	indeterminacy; “for any number of players and any sound producing means”
Muczynski, Robert	<i>Sonata for Flute and Piano</i> , op. 14	1961	jazz influences
Babbitt, Milton	<i>Composition for Synthesizer</i>	1961	
Fukushima, Kazuo	<i>Mei</i> for solo flute	1962	extended techniques such as pitch bending and multiphonics
Schnittke, Alfred	<i>Sonata No. I</i> , op. 30, for violin and piano	1963	serialism

**Figure 1:** Compositions contemporary with Denisov’s Flute Sonata

Denisov most likely would have heard the music listed above by fellow Soviet composers

Volkonsky, Shostakovich, Kabalevsky, Sviridov, and Schnittke. It is plausible that he might have

<sup>49</sup> Kholopov and Tsenova, *Denisov* 2002, 19-21.

<sup>50</sup> Schmelz, *Such Freedom*, 81.

encountered the music of Otar Gordeli, a composer from the Georgian Soviet Socialist Republic who completed his postgraduate studies at the Moscow Conservatoire.<sup>51</sup> But it is not likely that Denisov had much, if any, exposure to new compositions by non-Russian composers. Any contact would have come only through a performance at an international contemporary music festival, particularly Darmstadt or Paris.

Little is written on the composer's personal life during this period, but a brief chronological appendix in Kholopov and Tsenova's book indicates that Denisov, having married in 1957, welcomed the birth of his first child on September 9, 1960.<sup>52</sup> His son Dmitry<sup>53</sup> would later take up the flute and was credited with the first published recording of the 1960 flute sonata.

Dedicated to Alexander Korneyev, one of the foremost Russian flutists,<sup>54</sup> the sonata received its premiere in Moscow on March 27, 1962.<sup>55</sup> Sources disagree as to the flutist who performed the premiere. Kholopov and Tsenova's 1995 book mentions flutist Alexander Kozlov,<sup>56</sup> as does Habokian,<sup>57</sup> but Kholopov and Tsenova's 2002 edition credits Alexander Korneyev (the dedicatee).<sup>58</sup> The pianist, in all sources, is mentioned as Galina Rubtsova.

Shostakovich's mentor relationship with Denisov dissolved over the years as Denisov became more caught up with the current trends in music. Shostakovich's attitude toward modern music was more guarded, and he did not feel that serialism would even last: "Dodecaphony [twelve-tone music] not only has no future, it doesn't even have a present. It is just a 'fad' that is

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<sup>51</sup> "Otar Gordeli," G. Schirmer, Inc., [http://www.schirmer.com/default.aspx?TabId=2419&State\\_2872=2&composerId\\_2872=2782](http://www.schirmer.com/default.aspx?TabId=2419&State_2872=2&composerId_2872=2782) (accessed 12 March 2013).

<sup>52</sup> Kholopov and Tsenova, *Denisov* 2002, 299.

<sup>53</sup> I speculate that the name "Dmitry" may have been given to honor Denisov's mentor Shostakovich.

<sup>54</sup> "Alexander Korneyev," website for "Inna Gilmore, Classical Flutist," <http://www.innagilmore.com/AlexanderKorneyev.shtml> (accessed 17 February 2013).

<sup>55</sup> Kholopov and Tsenova, *Denisov* 2002, 307.

<sup>56</sup> Kholopov and Tsenova, *Denisov* 1995, 200.

<sup>57</sup> Habokian, 386.

<sup>58</sup> Kholopov and Tsenova, *Denisov* 2002, 307.

already passing.”<sup>59</sup> Laurel Fay comments on how the generation of young Soviet composers as a whole largely turned away from the iconic older composer:

“The music of Shostakovich had marked the approved limit of their academic training. Just as Shostakovich had rejected his academic models in search of his distinctive voice when he graduated from conservatory years earlier, many of them rejected him in turn. . . . The ambivalence the younger generation felt toward Shostakovich was only heightened by his all-too-public compromises in the official sphere.”<sup>60</sup>

Fay even goes so far as to say that Denisov “became alienated, even felt personally betrayed, by Shostakovich’s pusillanimous behavior.”<sup>61</sup> Shostakovich’s joining the Communist Party in 1960 may have proved to be too much for Denisov to accept.

By 1964 Denisov felt that he had obtained an adequate knowledge of the great modern composers and was at a stage where he could begin to articulate his own personal style.<sup>62</sup> The cantata *Sun of the Incas* is considered by many to be the first major landmark in Denisov’s *oeuvre*.<sup>63</sup> Susan Bradshaw described characteristics of the cantata in her 1984 article on Denisov’s music:

“The quasi-improvisatory rhythmic development of the three vocal movements of *Sun of the Incas* is evidently influenced by the contemporary Western avant-garde, boxes of freely repeating patterns and notes without rhythmic definition allowing for a more fragmented use of the row. . . . The wholly instrumental sections of the same work are based on the strict application of an almost Schoenbergian kind of motor rhythmic development much favoured by Denisov throughout the 1960’s.”<sup>64</sup>

Featuring texts of the Chilean poet Gabriela Mistral,<sup>65</sup> the cantata received performances in Darmstadt (under the conductor Bruno Maderna) and Paris (under the conductor Pierre Boulez) soon after its Leningrad premiere. Shostakovich himself was in favor of the piece being

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<sup>59</sup> Fay, *Shostakovich: A Life*, 214.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 283-284.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 284.

<sup>62</sup> Denisov’s personal style is discussed further in the second section of this paper.

<sup>63</sup> Kholopov and Tsenova, *Denisov* 2002, 21.

<sup>64</sup> Susan Bradshaw, “The Music of Edison Denisov,” *Tempo* New Series, no. 151 (Dec. 1984), 4-5.

<sup>65</sup> In 1945 Gabriela Mistral won a Nobel Prize in Literature.

performed in the Soviet Union,<sup>66</sup> and the cantata was listed in a Union of Soviet Composers' com-pilation of "New Works by Soviet Composers Recommended for Promotion in the 1965–66 Season."<sup>67</sup> However, in early 1966 the administration of the Union of Soviet Composers severely and publicly criticized the piece in the *Sovetskaya Muzyka* magazine, with secretary Tikhon Khrennikov citing it as "complete anarchy on the part of the composer."<sup>68</sup>

In his duties as a teacher at the Moscow Conservatoire, Denisov was not allowed to teach composition, but rather he taught classes in theory, analysis, orchestration, and score reading. The chair of music theory, Sergei Skrebkov, justified this course of action: "In a year or two Denisov will dry up as a composer and therefore he has to be prepared for teaching theoretical subjects."<sup>69</sup> The administration even attempted to steer the composition students away from Denisov's classes, assigning rather those majoring in musicology to his classes. Still, numbers of composition students insisted on being allowed to enroll in his sections, even going so far as to credit Denisov as being one of their composition teachers.<sup>70</sup> For a period of time Denisov was even restricted to the Conservatoire's military department, where his sole assignment was to teach soldiers to write marches.<sup>71</sup>

In August 1966, Edison Denisov wrote an article titled "The New Technique is Not a Fashion," which was published in *Il contemporaneo*, an Italian Communist Party magazine. In the article he contended,

"The Soviet composers of the young generation did not turn to modern techniques in order to follow a fad, but because the limits of the tonal system grew too narrow for the elaboration of the new ideas imposed on us continuously by reality itself."<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> Schwarz, *Musical Life*, 464.

<sup>67</sup> Schmelz, *Such Freedom*, 163-164.

<sup>68</sup> Kholopov and Tsenova, *Denisov* 2002, 23.

<sup>69</sup> Quoted in an interview with fellow teacher Viktor Zuckerman, in Kholopov and Tsenova, *Denisov* 2002, 35.

<sup>70</sup> Kholopov and Tsenova, *Denisov* 2002, 35-36.

<sup>71</sup> Kholopov and Tsenova, *Denisov* 2002, 35.

<sup>72</sup> Quoted in translation in Schmelz, *Such Freedom*, 176.

The administration of the Union of Soviet Composers, including Khrennikov, was upset by this article, and felt that Denisov was painting a distorted picture of the state of Soviet music.<sup>73</sup>

Denisov was dismissed from his teaching position at the Moscow Conservatoire (effective September 1, 1967). His students protested, and he was reinstated partway into the term.<sup>74</sup>

Edison Denisov's students held him in high esteem and acknowledged the value of his instruction. His orchestration student Dmitry Smirnov recalls:

“Denisov taught you to approach works by other composers not from the outside but from inside out: to show what I could do with this composition for orchestra if I were its author. I came to realise that I was [being] taught not only instrumentation but composition as well.”<sup>75</sup>

Bojidar Spasov credits Denisov with his decision to become a composer:

“I remember the day on which I ventured to show him my first endeavours. I was not even sure whether it was worthwhile for me to waste note-paper. But my urge to compose arose largely under the impact of the world discovered to myself by *The Sun of the Incas*, *Pleurs*, and some others of Denisov's compositions. I was dumbfounded when Edison Vasilyevich, without wasting any time on idle talk about the difficulties and responsibility involved in composition, showed me that he could help me to overcome my lack of self-confidence and go further.”<sup>76</sup>

The high priority that Denisov gave to color and rhythm in his own compositional career was a feature of his teaching methods as well.<sup>77</sup>

Despite a good reputation with his students, Edison Denisov continued to face bitter opposition from his peers for several decades. His compositions were frequently banned for performance. Denisov recalled, in a list of offenses against him, “On March 7, 1971 the flutist Alexander Korneyev and the pianist Alexander Bakhchiyev were forbidden to play my Sonata for Flute and Piano.”<sup>78</sup> Sometimes, when receiving a request for Denisov to appear as a guest artist for an international event, the authorities of the Composers' Union would turn down the

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<sup>73</sup> Kholopov and Tsenova, *Denisov* 2002, 25-26.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., 26.

<sup>75</sup> Quoted in Kholopov and Tsenova, *Denisov* 2002, 36.

<sup>76</sup> Kholopov and Tsenova, *Denisov* 2002, 38.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., 38.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid., 29.

invitation on behalf of Denisov, without even forwarding the invitation and correspondence to him.<sup>79</sup> In 1979 Denisov was named among the “Khrennikov Seven,” a handful of composers denounced by Tikhon Khrennikov at the Sixth Congress of the Composers’ Union for their popularity and participation at international music festivals.<sup>80</sup>

The tide finally turned in Denisov’s favor in the mid–1980s. He was elected as one of the seven secretaries of the Union of Soviet Composers. Rather than considering his acceptance to this post as a capitulation to the official Soviet doctrines, Denisov viewed his position as an opportunity to influence the Soviet music scene for the better. He was quoted in a 1990 article in the newspaper *Sovetskaya Kultura*:

“I thought that as a leader of the [Union of Soviet Composers] I would be more able to do something good, to help those who represented a pride of our music, whose works had never before been published, recorded or included in the official concerts.”<sup>81</sup>

Kholopov and Tsenova add the following praise for Denisov’s principled stand:

“The official functions (such as secretaryship at the Composers Union) spoils [*sic*] many persons and breaks [*sic*] them, but the Soviet bureaucratic machinery has failed to make Denisov compliant. He has remained honest and faithful to his artistic principles, refusing to become a conformist.”<sup>82</sup>

In January 1990 Denisov was also elected as president of the new Association of Contemporary Music, an avant-garde organization similar to the defunct association of the same name (1923–1932). The new ACM was “founded on an initiative of composers themselves as the creative alternative to the official activities of the Composers Union.”<sup>83</sup> The earlier version of the organization had promoted modernist and internationalist objectives, in opposition to its rival group, the Russian Association of Proletarian Musicians, and both of these non-state cultural

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<sup>79</sup> Ibid., 32.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid., 33. The other composers listed were Elena Firsova, Dmitri Smirnov, Alexander Knaifel, Viktor Suslin, Vyacheslav Artyomov, and Sofia Gubaidulina.

<sup>81</sup> Quoted in Kholopov and Tsenova, *Denisov* 2002, 40.

<sup>82</sup> Kholopov and Tsenova, *Denisov* 2002, 41.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid., 40.

organizations had been dissolved by the Soviet government in 1932.<sup>84</sup> The new ACM founded in 1990 looked to Denisov to head up the renewed fight for the development of modern music.

The eventual relaxation of international travel restrictions gave Denisov liberty to attend music festivals, judge competitions, and attend premieres of his compositions. In September 1990 he was finally able to accept the standing invitation from Pierre Boulez to participate at I.R.C.A.M.,<sup>85</sup> a center for electroacoustic musical research in Paris. Denisov's *Sur la Nappe d'un étang glace* ("On the Surface of a Frozen Pond") for nine instruments and tape, written in 1991, was a product of this six-month residency.<sup>86</sup>

Edison Denisov continued to compose despite a severe car accident in 1994 and a cancer diagnosis in 1995.<sup>87</sup> The flute figured prominently throughout his entire *oeuvre*, but particularly so in his late works, which included a concerto for flute and harp (1994–1995), a trio for flute, bassoon, and piano (1995), a concerto for flute and clarinet (1996), a sonata for two flutes (1996), and cadenzas for Mozart's concerto for flute and harp (1996). His very last composition, *Avant le coucher du soleil* ("Before Sunset") was composed for alto flute and vibraphone and was dedicated to his son Dmitry and percussionist Mark Pekarsky, who gave the premiere in Moscow three days before Edison Denisov's death.<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> Frolova-Walker, 380.

<sup>85</sup> *Institut de Recherche et Coordination Acoustique/Musique*

<sup>86</sup> Kholopov and Tsenova, *Denisov* 2002, 41.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, 44.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, 309.

## SECTION 2: ANALYSIS

### 2.1 DENISOV’S SECOND STYLE PERIOD

In the book *Edison Denisov: The Russian Voice in European New Music*, Kholopov and Tsenova divide Denisov’s musical career into four sections.<sup>89</sup> The “early period” (1947–1959) includes Denisov’s pre-Conservatoire compositions, which were influenced largely by Shostakovich, as well as his compositions during his Conservatoire studies. The second period, “break-through to a personal style” (1960–1964), encompasses Denisov’s post-Conservatoire years of independent study and experimentation. This second period culminated in the oratorio *The Sun of the Incas*, his first piece to achieve international recognition. Other compositions representative of this developmental period are listed in Figure 2. Kholopov and Tsenova note that a large proportion of Denisov’s *oeuvre* falls into the genre of chamber music and that this trend was established during this second period.<sup>90</sup>

COMPOSITION	NOTES
<i>Bagatelles</i> for piano (1960)	
<i>String Quartet No. 2</i> (1961)	In memory of Béla Bartók <sup>91</sup>
<i>Merry Time [Veselyj chas]</i> for voice and piano	On texts of 18 <sup>th</sup> -century Russian poets <sup>92</sup>
<i>Music for Eleven Wind Instruments and Timpani</i> (1961)	Noted as being one of his earliest attempts at twelve-tone composition <sup>93</sup>
<i>Variations</i> for piano (1961)	Another of his earliest attempts at serialism <sup>94</sup>
<i>Sonata for Violin and Piano</i> (1963)	
<i>Concerto for Flute, Oboe, Piano, and Percussion</i> (1963)	
<i>Italian Songs [Italianskie pesni]</i> for soprano, violin, flute, horn, and harpsichord (1964)	On texts of Russian poet Alexander Blok

**Figure 2:** Denisov’s second style period: “breakthrough to a personal style”

The third stage, described by Kholopov and Tsenova as Denisov’s “individual style” (1965–1977), found the composer settled into a distinct and flourishing personal style. Susan

<sup>89</sup> Kholopov and Tsenova, *Denisov* 2002, 57.

<sup>90</sup> Kholopov and Tsenova, *Denisov* 2002, 146.

<sup>91</sup> Kholopov and Tsenova, *Denisov* 2002, 310.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid., 314.

<sup>93</sup> Cairns, “Multiple-Row Serialism,” 7.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid.



Bradshaw's 1984 article "The Music of Edison Denisov" describes some characteristics of this period:

"By the end of the same decade [1960s] he had evolved an ultra-decorative means of expression that was recognizably his own even though it depended on the fractured rhythms and angular lines which were the trademark of the international avant-garde. At the beginning of the 1970's, a more characteristic type of canonic writing based on small intervals allied to irregular rhythms, was starting to make itself felt..."<sup>95</sup>

The final category is defined as "stabilization" (c. 1977–1990s). It is not immediately apparent what particular significance the year 1977 had on marking the stabilization of Denisov's style, but Susan Bradshaw's article casts some light on a possible line of reasoning:

"His true originality lies in the increasingly recognizable way in which he distributes and blends the various elements he has chosen to work with, and the music of the late 1970's shows a stylistic confidence that is able to embrace a greater variety of apparently diverse idioms (both harmonic and rhythmic) than ever before. But it was *the two-movement Violin Concerto of 1977 (written after a year's compositional silence)* which was the first work successfully to define form as the outcome of the contrast between its contributory elements."<sup>96</sup> (emphasis mine)

Perhaps Kholopov and Tsenova find importance in the apparent hurdle that was overcome as Denisov's compositional pause was followed by the 1977 violin concerto.

The *Sonata for Flute and Piano* (1960) falls into the second period described above, that of "breakthrough to a personal style." Kholopov and Tsenova reflect on how Denisov's in-depth examination of the music he had not been able or allowed to study at the Moscow Conservatoire enabled him to "pass through" the creative giants of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, to assimilate the contemporary musical vocabulary, and ultimately to find his own compositional voice:

"No doubt, the decisive factor in a breakthrough to one's personal style is an irresistible spiritual motion, a drive to give birth to new artistic and cultural values. But to become a reality, this impulse has to be embodied in the elements of a musical system – a structure of pitches, rhythms and patterns in tune with the spirit of the times... For this reason precisely the necessity to 'pass' through Bartók, Stravinsky, Schoenberg and Webern proved so irresistible when Denisov had grasped it by intuition. By having 'let it pass' through

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<sup>95</sup> Bradshaw, "The Music of Edison Denisov," 5.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid.

himself, a composer finds himself in the proper position to make a creative breakthrough which only then becomes possible. To be more precise, this position of jumping off, therefore, consists in a state of a musical system which has assimilated the seeds of new quality to emerge so ‘suddenly’ and ‘unexpectedly’ in the form of a new individual modern style.”<sup>97</sup>

Writing about Denisov’s *Bagatelles*, a series of piano miniatures written in 1960 prior to the flute sonata, Kholopov and Tsenova observe:

“In this composition you can already feel the tonal conventions becoming too restrictive, the composer finding himself at a point defined by Schoenberg as “An den Grenzen der Tonart” (At the Tonal Boundaries). But in this case a road beyond the tonal boundaries is different – not the loosening of the tonal gravity (like with Schoenberg) but polystructures – polymodality and polytonality.”<sup>98</sup>

In many respects, Denisov’s flute sonata can be viewed as a polystylistic collage in which he experimented with the new techniques that he now had at his disposal. Alfred Schnittke, who studied at the Moscow Conservatoire (1953–1958) and, like Denisov, continued on for his post-graduate degree (1958–1961), was characterized by a similar polystylistic vocabulary in his compositions. In fact, Schnittke credited his polystylism to “the filling of gaps in his musical knowledge during these [Conservatoire] years.”<sup>99</sup> One interesting study would be to make observations about the extent to which Denisov’s second-period compositions resemble each other, or even resemble those of Schnittke, in their collage-like experimentation.

## 2.2 THE “SONATA” GENRE

Denisov’s use of the familiar term “Sonata” gives pause for thought, since this composition is not a typical multi-movement sonata. Perhaps “Sonatina” would be a more fitting genre title for this work. The “Sonata” label is not without precedent however, for one can look back to the solo keyboard sonatas of Domenico Scarlatti (1685–1757) to find single-movement

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<sup>97</sup> Kholopov and Tsenova, *Denisov* 2002, 65.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, 59.

<sup>99</sup> Ivan Moody and Alexander Ivashkin, “Schnittke, Alfred,” *Oxford Music Online*, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/51128> (accessed 4 March 2013).

compositions with the title.<sup>100</sup> Though not adhering to a strict classic sonata principle,<sup>101</sup> Denisov's *Sonata for Flute and Piano* does retain many similarities to sonata form. As I analyzed the piece, I sought to identify formal sections in relation to the "Sonata" title. The sonata can be divided up into thematic areas as charted in Figure 3.

mm.	"SONATA FORM" <sup>102</sup>	DETAILS
1-62	"exposition"	mm. 1-16: First theme (triplets, arpeggios)
		mm. 17-33: Second theme (lyrical, chordal accompaniment)
		mm. 34-38: Transition back to first theme
		mm. 39-47: First theme
		mm. 48-53: Second theme (piano) against flute's first theme triplets
		mm. 54-57: First theme (flute) against piano's foreshadowing of third theme
		mm. 58-62: Third theme (chant-like, seconds and thirds)
63-140	"development"	Dotted rhythms and triplets throughout
		mm. 78-102: New folk-like melody
		mm. 95, 111: Inversion of first theme
141-164	"recapitulation"	mm. 141-151: First theme
		mm. 152-164: Third theme
		mm. 156-157: Reference to second theme (contour)
		mm. 161-164: B-minor chord (compare to m. 1)

**Figure 3:** Three-part form in Denisov's *Sonata for Flute and Piano*

In an essay describing any composer's general compositional process, Denisov makes the statement:

"Every composer makes his own individual selection from the limitless multitude of sounds, and, in making this selection, inwardly arranges a finite number of sounds (or sound-objects), of his choice, in an appropriate relationship; that is, he regulates this host of sounds by some method, creating the very form of the work."<sup>103</sup>

Such is no doubt true for the *Flute Sonata*, in which Denisov sets up a definite sound world in

<sup>100</sup> Baroque sonatas, including those of Scarlatti, typically featured a binary (AB) formal structure.

<sup>101</sup> James Hepokoski and Warren Darcy, *Elements of Sonata Theory: Norms, Types, and Deformations in the Late-Eighteenth-Century Sonata* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006).

<sup>102</sup> My sectional designations (e.g., "exposition,") are loosely defined here, reminiscent of the standard ternary form; they are not to be confused with Hepokoski and Darcy's sonata theory.

<sup>103</sup> Edison Denisov, "The Compositional Process," *Tempo* New Series, no. 105 (June 1973), 8.

the first theme and then spins out creative variations on his initial idea. The initial motive is featured in the flute's very first measure, an ascending "D–F–A–C<sup>#</sup>" arpeggio, which becomes one key to determining the form of the composition. My outline of the form reveals the following divisions (see Figure 3).

The first theme is characterized by triplets, based largely on the basic idea of arpeggiated thirds presented in the opening two measures. The second theme features an expansive lyrical theme with larger melodic intervals, accompanied by chordal textures in the piano. In mm. 48–53, the piano is given this second theme while the flute accompanies with little cells based on an inversion of the first theme. The third theme is quite chant-like and based on small intervals. This third theme, foreshadowed as early as mm. 8 and 11 in the piano accompaniment and m. 27 in the flute part, is again previewed in augmentation in the accompaniment (mm. 54–57) before the official presentation by the flute in m. 58.

Brian Luce's dissertation on Denisov's *Quatre pièces pour flûte et piano* includes a short section addressing the 1960 flute sonata.<sup>104</sup> Luce makes quite a stretch in calling the work a "three-movement" sonata, and his recording of the composition is divided into three tracks,<sup>105</sup> but his divisions correspond logically to his labels of exposition (the *Lento espressivo* opening), development (the *Allegro impetuoso* at m. 63), and recapitulation (*Tempo I – Lento espressivo* at m. 141).

Though Denisov would experiment with serialism more intentionally in subsequent pieces, an attempt at a tone row does make its way into the opening of this collage-like sonata. Figure 4 identifies the pitch classes of this "row." The pianist's right hand plays a ten-note row of pitch classes 4, 8, 5, 1, 9, T, 7, 6, E, 3, while the left hand enters imitatively with the slightly

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<sup>104</sup> Luce, *Light*, 65–66.

<sup>105</sup> Brian Luce, flute, *Flute Recital: Music of the Superpowers*, Rex Woods, piano (Albany Records, CD TROY1059, 2008).

different ten-note row 4, 8, 5, 1, 9, T, 7, 6, 3, 0. If considered with the flute's D trill (pc 2), these measures contain all twelve pitches.



**Figure 4:** Experimentation with tone rows, mm. 3-4

## 2.3 TERTIAN RELATIONSHIPS

Both Luce's dissertation and Kholopov and Tsenova's book refer to the "bitonality" and/or "polytonality" of Denisov's flute sonata. Kholopov and Tsenova write:

"His Sonata for Flute and Piano (1960) may be regarded as a critical point of departure. Formally it is a tonal composition in the unequivocal B minor. But in essence throughout the Sonata there is virtually no concentration on any definite tonal centre. From the very beginning the polyharmonic combination *b - des - f* [ $B^b - D^b - F$ ] (piano) and *d - f - a - cis* [ $D - F - A - C^\sharp$ ] (flute) paradoxically closes up the enharmonic circle *des = cis* [ $D^b = C^\sharp$ ]."<sup>106</sup>

Similarly Luce refers to the  $B^b$  minor/D minor relationship as a "bitonal problem" that is "reconciled in favor of B-flat minor."<sup>107</sup> Rather than being an expression of true bitonality, which finds clearer articulation in Bartók, this relationship perhaps could better be described as a thematic element. The  $T_4$  relationship (transposition by 4 semitones) returns in other guises, as discussed below.

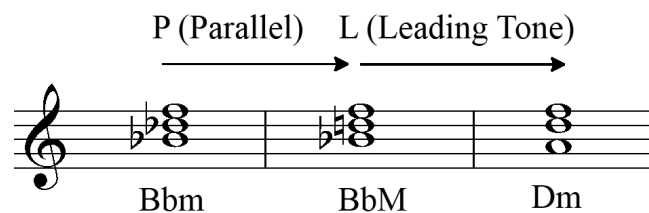
Joseph Straus's *Introduction to Post-Tonal Theory* addresses the concept of triadic post-tonality, in which triads are used not in a functional context (i.e., predominant, dominant, tonic)

<sup>106</sup> Kholopov and Tsenova, *Denisov* 2002, 60. The "B minor" in this quote is the European labeling for B-flat, whereas "H" would have represented B-natural.

<sup>107</sup> Luce, *Light*, 65.

but in motivic or transformational roles.<sup>108</sup> In post-tonal tertian harmony, the triads often govern the music according to principles of parsimonious voice leading, in which one triad is “transformed” into another through semitone movement.

In the two triads introducing the sonata, B-flat minor in the piano and D minor in the flute, F functions as a common tone between the two triads. In neo-Riemannian terminology, this transformation is a PL transformation (as illustrated in Figure 5).<sup>109</sup> The third of the B<sup>b</sup> minor triad is raised by one semitone for the Parallel transformation to B<sup>b</sup> major, and the root of the B<sup>b</sup> major triad descends by one semitone in the Leading Tone transformation, to become the fifth of the D minor triad.



**Figure 5:** PL transformation from B<sup>b</sup>m to Dm, mm. 1-2

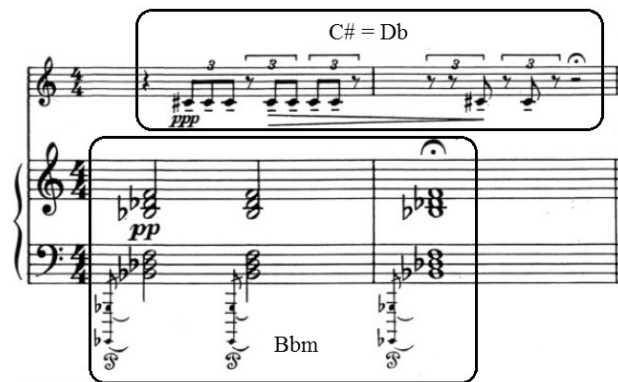
The relationship between these two triads of the sonata’s opening is further strengthened by the inclusion of a C<sup>#</sup> (the major seventh) at the culmination of the D minor arpeggio. This pitch class relates enharmonically to the D<sup>b</sup> of the B<sup>b</sup> triad, finding its ultimate expression at the very end of the piece, where the flute sits on a low C<sup>#</sup> against the piano’s B-flat minor chord (see Figure 6).

When one views the opening B<sup>b</sup> minor and D minor triads as a thematic element of the sonata, this theme can be traced through the composition. For instance, immediately after the flute plays the notes of the D minor seventh chord, the line continues with an arpeggiation that

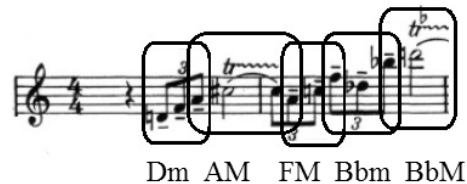
<sup>108</sup> Joseph N. Straus, *Introduction to Post-Tonal Theory*, 3rd ed. (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Prentice Hall, 2005), 158-159.

<sup>109</sup> Straus, *Post-Tonal*, 161.

shifts rapidly through the area of A major (A, C<sup>#</sup>), F major (F, A, C), and B<sup>b</sup> minor (B<sup>b</sup>, D<sup>b</sup>, F), to arrive at B<sup>b</sup> major (B<sup>b</sup>, D), as illustrated in Figure 7.

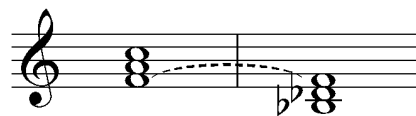


**Figure 6:** C<sup>#</sup> enharmonic with B<sup>b</sup> minor, mm. 163-164



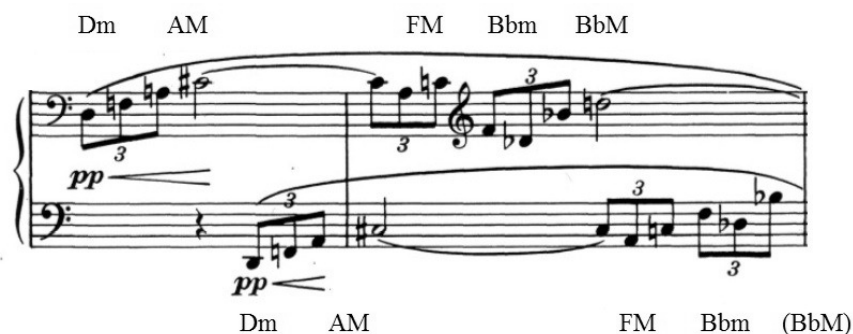
**Figure 7:** Tonal areas represented in arpeggiation, mm. 1-2

The “F major” area in the middle of the arpeggio suggests the symmetrical axis it shares with B<sup>b</sup> minor (see Figure 8).



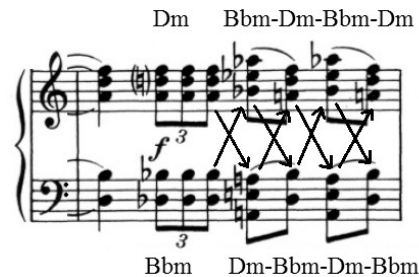
**Figure 8:** Axis on F

The piano later takes up this idea in the canonic presentation in mm. 12-13 (see Figure 9), developing the tertian harmony motive.



**Figure 9:** Tonal areas represented in arpeggiation, mm. 12-13

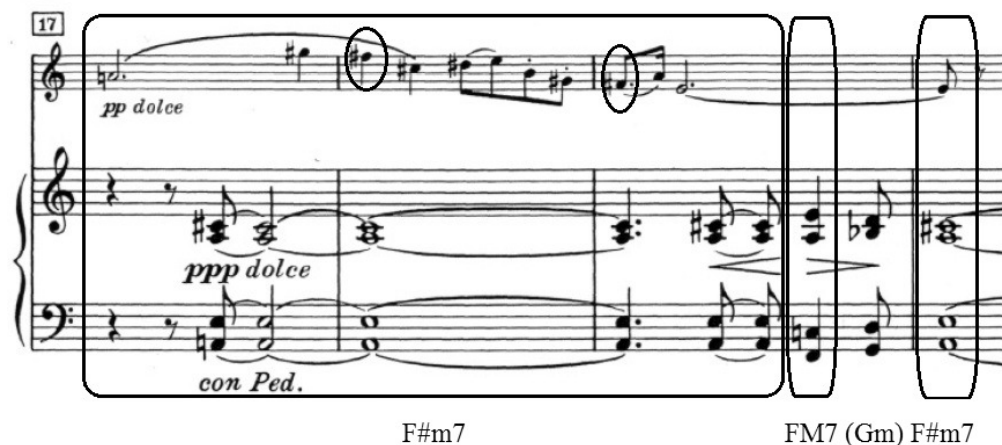
These related tertian harmonies are present in a different guise in mm. 8-9, where the piano chords feature the two hands vacillating between the two diatonic collections represented by B<sup>b</sup> minor and D minor, illustrated in Figure 10.<sup>110</sup>



**Figure 10:** Vacillation between two diatonic collections, m. 8

When the second theme arrives in m. 17, the flute plays a lyrical line while the homophonic piano texture alternates between an A major triad and an F major sonority (by way of a passing G minor triad). These two chords possess the same T<sub>4</sub> relationship as the two chords featured at the opening, since A and F are 4 semitones apart.<sup>111</sup>

Since the flute line features F<sup>#</sup> prominently in its melody, one could include the F<sup>#</sup> with the other pitches in the piano line to create an F<sup>#</sup>-A-C<sup>#</sup>-E seventh chord, F<sup>#</sup>m<sup>7</sup> (see Figure 11).



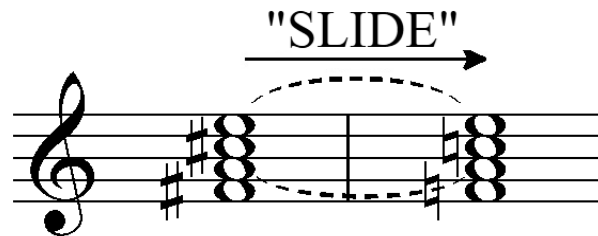
**Figure 11:** Seventh chords, mm. 17-20

<sup>110</sup> Note that while the A-E-A chord in the left hand appears to be an A sonority, I am identifying its membership in the D minor diatonic collection. Likewise, the right hand's B<sup>b</sup>-E<sup>b</sup>-A<sup>b</sup> sonority belongs to the B<sup>b</sup> minor collection.

<sup>111</sup> Whereas earlier the two chords were minor, here they are both major.

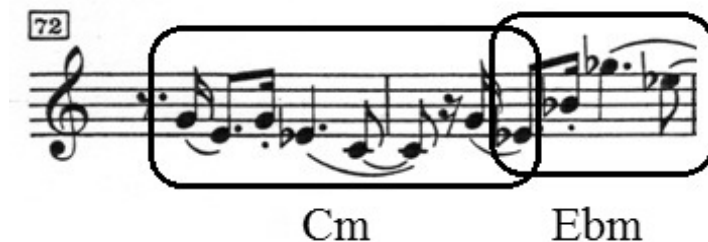


When viewed alongside the FM<sup>7</sup> chord, this passage could be said to contain a partial SLIDE transformation, within a seventh chord context (see Figure 12). The A and E are retained as common tones, while the C<sup>#</sup> moves down a semitone to a C-natural and the F<sup>#</sup> moves down to F.



**Figure 12:** Parsimonious voice leading in two seventh chords, mm. 17-20

In the “development” section of the sonata, a T<sub>3</sub> relationship makes an appearance in mm. 72-73 of the flute line. In a restless dotted rhythm pattern, the flute seems to transition from C minor to E<sup>b</sup> minor in a melodic guise (see Figure 13). In another melodic presentation, the longer note values in the flute melody (mm. 78-84) outline a progression from B to D to F<sup>#</sup>, movement by 3 and 4 semitones, respectively. This entire flute passage is tonally centered in B minor, but the piano provides tonal ambiguity in its thick chords and meandering lines (see Figure 14). Even the ten-note row in mm. 3-4 possesses a substantial showing of pitch-class interval classes 3 and 4 (see Figure 15).<sup>112</sup>



**Figure 13:** T<sub>3</sub> relationship in the flute line, mm. 72-73

<sup>112</sup> For my purpose of highlighting the intervals of 3 and 4 in the rows, I have not labeled for identification the few other intervals contained in the rows.

Figure 14 shows a musical score with three systems. The first system (measures 78-79) features a flute line with a sustained pitch B, indicated by a box and a line to the piano part. The piano part has triplets in both hands. The second system (measures 80-81) features a sustained pitch D in the flute line, also boxed and connected to the piano part. The piano part continues with triplets. The third system (measures 82-84) features a sustained pitch F# in the flute line, boxed and connected to the piano part. The piano part includes dynamic markings 'dim.' and continues with triplets.

**Figure 14:** B–D–F<sup>#</sup> sustained pitches in the flute line, mm. 78-84

Figure 15 displays two ten-note rows from the piano line, showing pitch-class intervals and pitch classes. The right-hand row has intervals 4, 3, 4, 4, 3, 4 and pitch classes 4, 8, 5, 1, 9, T, 7, 6, E, 3. The left-hand row has intervals 4, 3, 4, 4, 3, 3, 3 and pitch classes 4, 8, 5, 1, 9, T, 7, 6, 3, 0.

**Figure 15:** Pitch-class intervals 3 and 4 in ten-note rows of the piano line, mm. 3-4

## 2.4 DENISOV'S MATURE STYLE CHARACTERISTICS

Kholopov and Tsenova codify the characteristic elements of Denisov's compositional style.<sup>113</sup> Denisov's 1960 flute sonata of course would not exhibit all of these mature style characteristics, but it is intriguing to examine how his personal style was indeed developing during those initial post-Conservatoire years.

One of the characteristics identified by Kholopov and Tsenova is "*high lyricism*:" "most expressive heartfelt lyricism rendered in gentle tones and a slow tempo, in the upper register, often in bright and captivating timbres."<sup>114</sup> The most obvious lyricism of the flute sonata is found in mm. 17-22, the second theme of the "exposition." The folk-like flute melody in the middle section of the sonata (mm. 78-102) is also quite lyrical, though accompanied by rhythmically active material in the piano.

Another key characteristic of Denisov's style is "*lyrical interweaving*:"

"The flowing of several voices [appear] on a par at different times in quasi-arhythmical and ametrical rendering. . . . The constituent voices merge together without underlining the upper voice as the leading one."<sup>115</sup>

The imitative and canonic portions of the flute sonata are an early representation of this compositional device (see Figure 16).

A third characteristic of Denisov's mature style is "*shooting, pricking, and sharply rhythmical dots*:" "quasi-unordered pointillistic simultaneous statement of accentuated *staccato* sounds or chords in all registers in turn."<sup>116</sup> I identify this characteristic in the piano

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<sup>113</sup> Kholopov and Tsenova, *Denisov* 2002, 67-84.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*, 69.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*, 70.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*, 72. Kholopov and Tsenova reference the broken rhythms in the *finale* of Stravinsky's *Rite of Spring* as a prototype.

accompaniment of the middle section, in which the piano accompanies the flute's lyrical line with pointillistic Morse code-like chords (see Figure 17).<sup>117</sup>



**Figure 16:** Imitation and canon, mm. 128-131



**Figure 17:** “Shooting” chords, mm. 79-80

The thick chordal sonorities and complex rhythms of Denisov’s *Sonata for Flute and Piano* preview the direction Denisov would take in his compositional style. As Denisov continued to refine his personal style, his fascination with tone colors, timbres, and rhythm became increasingly more evident in his compositions.

<sup>117</sup> The “Morse code” rhythm is given to the flute at the end of the sonata in a slow, mysterious chant-like presentation (mm. 163-164).

### SECTION 3: PERFORMANCE GUIDE

In this portion of the paper, I offer suggestions based on my personal practice of the sonata. These suggestions pertain to matters of interpretation (articulation, dynamics, style, terminology), issues of rhythm and ensemble with the piano, and items relating to technique and intonation.

#### 3.1 INTERPRETATION

Articulation plays a significant role in the piece. The flute's opening triplet motive is labeled with *tenuto* articulation symbols—a horizontal line above or below each triplet eighth note—and this motive is featured throughout the sonata. Rather than being played with a soft *legato* tonguing, as the *tenuto* symbol often means, these triplet arpeggios should be well articulated<sup>118</sup> while still giving each note its full length.<sup>119</sup> The danger of playing these triplets too *legato* is that the arpeggios could sound less important than the trills which easily shine forth from the contour of the musical line. The trills themselves should have forward direction, with sufficient resonance when breathing on the ties.

Dynamics, too, are important throughout the composition. Denisov is very specific about the printed dynamic levels, often marking the piano part one level below the flute part to achieve the proper balance. For instance, the pianist is given a *piano* dynamic in the first measure while the flutist has a *mezzo-piano* for the D4 entrance. Correspondingly, in m. 8 the flute is marked *fortissimo* at the peak of the crescendo, while the piano only comes up to *forte*. At the arrival of the second theme in m. 17, the flutist should be intentional about the tone color; the directions

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<sup>118</sup> I often use the terms “marked” and “stressed” to describe the meaning of this articulation symbol.

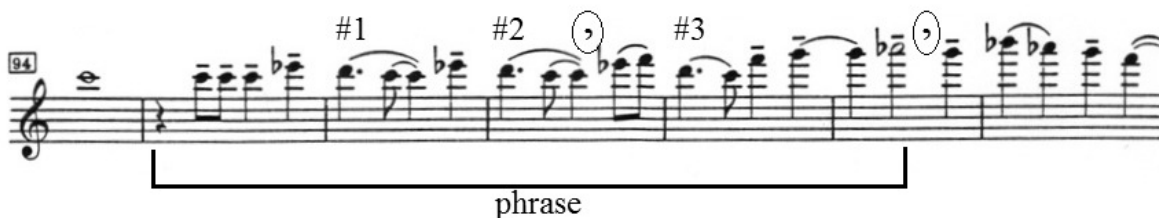
<sup>119</sup> The piano's long slurs over later similar passages featuring this triplet motive (such as mm. 12-14) are not necessarily a contradiction to this interpretation, since in those instances the triplet passages are canonic and lacking the trills.

for *pianissimo* and *dolce* call to mind a subtler use of vibrato. When the second phrase begins in m. 20, I choose a slightly softer dynamic to set up the *crescendo* into m. 24.

Note that sometimes the pianist is given the primary role, such as the *forte subito* at the *Allegro impetuoso* in m. 63. The flutist should resist matching the pianist's aggressive downbeat, instead completing the long low-register phrase with the notated *decrescendo*. In m. 69 the flute and piano lines are both marked *pianissimo*. The performers should be sensitive to the balance here, since the flute's low register gestures can easily be covered by the piano's bass line.

Regarding matters of performance style, several portions of the sonata have style characteristics that could be connected with Denisov's Russian heritage and folkloristic expedition during his Conservatoire years. For instance, mm. 58-62 are somewhat reminiscent of medieval Russian chant. The thick, cold piano chord could be interpreted as the characteristic "drone" of the chant. This recitative-like material appears again in mm. 152-164, here with the piano's long trill functioning as the "drone." In these sections, a *tenuto* marking is again assigned to the flute theme. Careful consideration must be given to tongue placement so that the repeated low-register C-sharps are audibly distinct, especially if the performing space has an acoustical reverberation that tends to blur together articulated notes. Many flutists have success with a forward-tonguing approach, where the tongue pulls back from between the teeth to give the airstream a clear beginning. Others find low-register clarity by means of tonguing further back in the mouth, using an almost guttural approach.

A folk-like flute theme appears in mm. 78-102, and is even firmly centered on C minor for a time (mm. 84-94). This minor melody features a long phrase in the flute line, and if possible, the flutist should avoid breathing within certain four-measure phrases, namely mm. 78-81, 87-90, and 91-94. An additional four-measure phrase occurs in mm. 95-98 (see Figure 18).



**Figure 18:** Intensity building with three similar gestures, mm. 95-98

Here the flutist plays D6-C6 in three successive measures. Since such a three-fold presentation calls for an increase in intensity, the flutist could breathe before the fourth beat of m. 97 if necessary, in order to maintain and build intensity and volume towards the G6 in m. 98.

### 3.2 RHYTHM AND ENSEMBLE

While conceptually it might seem convenient to interpret the sextuplet on the fifth beat of m. 4 as a subdivided version of the triplet on the preceding beat, the understanding of this gesture as two descending triplets, one on each eighth note, will allow the flutist to line up with the pianist's eighth notes and sixteenth notes occurring simultaneously (see Figure 19). Moreover, the piano lines here are engaged in a crescendo, in preparation for a *forte-piano* marking on the downbeat of m. 5, while the flute line is marked with a decrescendo into a beat of silence on the downbeat.



**Figure 19:** Subdivision for flute's sextuplet, m. 4

Because of the length of the trills and the fact that they contain ties across a beat and often across a bar line, the flutist would do well to notate rhythmic cues for the pianist's activity

during these trills, mm. 3-5 being the first instance. These cues are especially helpful when the piano is marked with an *accelerando* during the flute trill, as in m. 9. This *accelerando* is helpful in carrying the flutist through the long *fortissimo* B6–C7 trill.

During the flute's cadenza-like material in mm. 10 and 47, the piano has no moving line aside from the chord on the downbeat. Furthermore, the flute's *poco rubato* expression in m. 10 and a *piacere* expression in m. 47 signify a cadenza-like freedom where the line can slow into the trill "landing." Thus it is helpful to think "4 + 3" on the septuplets, keeping in mind that the seven sixteenths on beat 5 are noticeably slower than the nine sixteenths on beat 4.

Lest the piano's triplets in mm. 12-13 subconsciously lull the flutist into a relaxed lilting rhythm, the flutist should be vigilant for accuracy in the dotted-eighths and sixteenths, beginning with the pick-up into m. 14. This snappy gesture foreshadows the flute's rapid dotted rhythm at m. 66, where again precision against the piano's triplets is required.

Both instruments have *poco rubato* notated in m. 50. Because in m. 48 the pianist takes up a chorale presentation of the second theme, the flutist fills an accompanimental role here and any *rubato* must fit into the musical expression of the pianist's phrasing. The flutist then reclaims a soloistic role at the third theme in m. 58.

A new tempo arrives at m. 63, marked *Allegro impetuoso* with a suggested metronome marking of 160. The Italian term *impetuoso* suggests a fiery and aggressive character for this rhythm-driven section of the sonata (mm. 63-137). The Morse code-like portions of the piano accompaniment create an ambiguity of the pulse that can prove difficult for ensemble. The flute is given this rhythmic idea as well, in mm. 113-114.<sup>120</sup> My initial plan was to maintain a feeling of two beats per measure, rather than four, to aid in the alignment of the flute and piano.

However, upon rehearsing this section with the pianist, I found that a cut-time feeling of the

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<sup>120</sup> Compare this rhythmic motive with the final two measures of the sonata.



meter detracts from the overall character, whereas the unrelenting 4/4 meter evokes the aggressive nature implied by the *impetuoso* expression. One could even envision a brisk militaristic march, especially in the portions where the flute or piano is engaged in a dotted-eighth-and-sixteenth-note pattern.

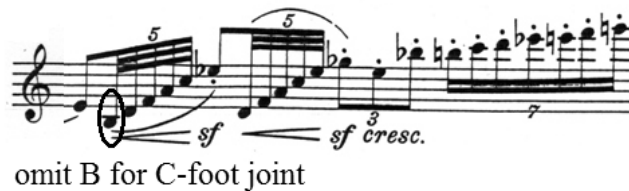
To strengthen the flutist's awareness of the accompanying Morse code-like material and how the flute line interacts with it, I offer a practice strategy which has been beneficial in many other rhythmically complex compositions. When a pianist is not available for rehearsal, or perhaps to reduce the amount of time necessary for joint rehearsals, the flutist can create an "accompaniment track" using a simple recording device. Whether speaking the piano's rhythmic lines in a *Sprechstimme* fashion, or playing them on the flute, the flutist can record portions at different tempi. Since the quarter note pulse in this section is steady, it is possible to record the rhythms against a metronome's "click track." To achieve the affect of a metronome's steadiness, yet without having it beat audibly on the recorded accompaniment, one can listen to the metronome through headphones while recording the accompaniment. By playing the flute line against this recording, the flutist can become intimately acquainted with the trouble spots.

The instruction *raffrenando*, given to the pianist in m. 138, potentially could be unfamiliar to a musician. A gerund form of the Italian verb *raffrenare*, "restrain," it is ultimately derived from the verb *frenare*, "brake." An asterisk in the score directs the musician's attention to the footnoted German term *zurückhalten* ("hold back" or "restrain"). Thus, Denisov here instructs the pianist to gradually pull back the tempo in mm. 138-139, heading into the well-accented *molto rallentando* in m. 140. This section, specifically mm. 138-140, forms the climactic moment of the piece, culminating with the piano's *fff* chord on the downbeat of m. 141 and ushering in the "recapitulation" material. The flutist should take in enough air in m. 137 to maintain

direction and volume on the B6-C7 trill until the piano's accented downbeat at m. 140, taking care not to end the trill prematurely.

### 3.3 TECHNIQUE AND INTONATION

This sonata requires technical proficiency and a flexible embouchure, and the flutist should be comfortable with the extreme ranges of the flute. If the flutist does not have a B-foot joint on his or her flute, the one B3 in m. 34 can be omitted, transforming the quintuplet run into a group of four thirty-second notes beginning on the D4 (see Figure 20).



**Figure 20:** B3 in the flute line, m. 34

The long trills throughout the sonata should be played with a feeling of direction, or “traveling,” lest they sound stagnant. At mm. 111-112, 121-122, and 127-133, the flutist must be careful not to pulse the trills with the airstream. This is a very rhythmically energetic section, yet the trills should sound organic and not as though the flutist is busy counting every quarter note.

In the rapid triplet passages of the “development,” it may be beneficial to use (and mark) a “k” articulation on some of the staccato notes. For example, for m. 76 and similar passages, my strategy is illustrated in Figure 21.



**Figure 21:** Flute articulation choices in rapid triplet passage, m. 76

Regarding intonation, the flutist must take care that the pitch of the E4 in mm. 19 and 22 is not too low. In its role as the fifth in an A major triadic sonority it would be played two cents

sharp when considering just intonation. But in this situation with the equal temperament of the piano, it is more appropriate and practical for the flutist to seek a blend with the piano's E3 and E4. The same is true when both instruments are playing up an octave in mm. 31 and 33, where the flute is playing an E4 and then an E6 against the piano's E5 and E6.

I offer several fingering suggestions that I have found helpful for my own performance. For the C<sup>#</sup> trill in mm. 1, 39, 43, and 142, the flutist has the option of pressing down the right hand's F<sup>#</sup> key. This added finger creates extra stability on a trill where the flute's balance potentially could be precarious. This strategy is also helpful for the second beat of mm. 18 and 21, where RH 3 can remain down as the F<sup>#</sup> moves to the C<sup>#</sup>.

The trill D6–E<sup>b</sup>6 (mm. 2-4, 40, 44-46, 143-144) can be fingered several ways, but in choosing a fingering, intonation is of utmost importance. I have found the best intonation on my flute to be using both right-hand trill keys at a *mezzo-forte* dynamic, and only the second trill key when playing *forte* or louder.

If the flutist is not accustomed to choosing the left-hand thumb B<sup>b</sup> fingering, there are several passages where I strongly advocate that this fingering be used. The thumb fingering eliminates cross-fingering in such places as the B<sup>b</sup> in the fifth-beat sextuplet in m. 4, the A–B<sup>b</sup>–G eighth notes in m. 15, and the third- and fourth-beat triplets in m. 28.

Press the second trill key with the third finger of the right hand while playing the E6 in m. 29, to help keep the pitch up during the printed *pianissimo* dynamic (as previously discussed under the topic of intonation). It can also be helpful to very slightly nudge the first trill key with the second finger of the right hand for the E5 in m. 31, also for intonation purposes.

Three final fingering suggestions may help a flutist who is learning this sonata. Lifting the right pinky on the fourth-beat E6 of mm. 66 and 115 prevents this sensitive note from

cracking. For the A<sup>#</sup>-B trill in m. 133, I prefer to use the right-hand B<sup>b</sup> lever for light, quick response (rather than the heavier right-hand F-key option that engages several other keys). Finally, an especially light finger dexterity is required at m. 136. The flutist should make sure that the A-B<sup>b</sup> trills begin and end on the principal note.

I would suggest that the flutist add some courtesy accidentals to the score as a preventative measure during the learning process. These suggested pencil markings for the flute part are listed in Figure 22. One particular courtesy accidental helpful for the pianist is the D-E<sup>b</sup> trill in m. 147. I have encountered several instances of this trill being mistakenly executed D<sup>b</sup>-E<sup>b</sup>.

MEASURE	COMMENT
m. 7	C <sup>b</sup> in 4 <sup>th</sup> beat triplet
m. 10	G <sup>b</sup> 5 and E <sup>b</sup> 5 in the 5 <sup>th</sup> -beat septuplet
m. 36	C <sup>#</sup> in 11-note run
m. 47	E <sup>b</sup> in 2 <sup>nd</sup> beat
m. 47	D-natural in 4 <sup>th</sup> -beat septuplet
mm. 51, 54	D <sup>#</sup> in 4 <sup>th</sup> -beat triplet
m. 74	B <sup>b</sup> and A <sup>b</sup> carry throughout the measure
mm. 103-104	B-natural to begin 16 <sup>th</sup> -note flourishes
m. 111	G <sup>b</sup> carries throughout the measure

**Figure 22:** Courtesy accidentals for the flute part

### 3.4 RECORDINGS

The earliest recording of this sonata is found on a 1994 CD album from the Russian label Vista Vera, featuring Edison Denisov's son Dmitry. Dmitry Denisov (b. 1960) is a professional flutist with training from the Moscow Conservatoire.<sup>121</sup> As of the time of the album's production, Dmitry was the principal flutist for the Moscow Ensemble of Modern Music.<sup>122</sup> I believe that this recording is based on an earlier edition of the work because of several audible discrepancies with

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<sup>121</sup> Dmitry Denisov [sic], flute, *Edison Denisov* [sic]: *Works for Flute and Piano*, Marina Parshina, piano (Vista Vera CD 00003, 1994), liner notes.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid.

my edition. The flute sonata was first published in 1967 by Soviet publisher Muzyka,<sup>123</sup> and it is possible that the Muzyka edition differed from the current C. F. Peters edition. Another possibility is that Dmitry was playing from his father's own manuscript. The most noticeable difference is mm. 101-102, where several beats are omitted in the thickly-textured passage. Dmitry Denisov's album features others of his father's compositions for flute (all recorded here for the first time), namely the *Sonata for Solo Flute* (1982), *Quatre pieces* for flute and piano (1977), *Prelude et Aria* for flute and piano (1978), and *Silhouettes* for flute, two pianos, and percussion (1969).

Moscow-born flutist Alexandra Grot recorded the sonata on a 2006 album on the Harmonia Mundi label.<sup>124</sup> Her CD is available through the Naxos Music Library<sup>125</sup> and also contains works by Schnittke, Stravinsky, and Prokofiev.<sup>126</sup> Grot's performance of Denisov's flute sonata offers the C-foot option for m. 34, described above.

Brian Luce's 2008 recording on the Albany Records label divides the sonata into three tracks which correspond to the three sonata-form components I identified in my analysis prior to finding this recording.<sup>127</sup> Luce is currently the professor of flute at the University of Arizona and a Yamaha Performing Artist.<sup>128</sup>

The two other recordings I was able to locate feature flutists Manuela Wiesler<sup>129</sup> and Sarah Bassingthwaighe.<sup>130</sup> Manuela Wiesler is a Brazilian-born Austrian flutist, and her 2006

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<sup>123</sup> Kholopov and Tsenova, *Denisov* 2002, 307.

<sup>124</sup> "Alexandra Grot: Biography," <http://www.alexandragrot.com/en/> (accessed 30 March 2013).

<sup>125</sup> *Naxos Music Library*, <http://www.naxos.com/> (accessed 30 March 2013).

<sup>126</sup> Alexandra Grot, flute, *Schnittke / Prokofiev / Stravinsky / Denisov*, Peter Laul, piano (Harmonia Mundi CD 911918, 2006).

<sup>127</sup> Brian Luce, flute, *Flute Recital: Music of the Superpowers*, Rex Woods, piano (Albany Records CD TROY1059, 2008).

<sup>128</sup> "Brian Luce, Flutist" <http://www.brianluce.com/> (accessed 30 March 2013).

<sup>129</sup> Manuela Wiesler, flute, *The Russian Flute*, Roland Pontinen, piano (BIS CD 419, 1994).

<sup>130</sup> Sarah Bassingthwaighe, flute, *Songs from the Caucasus*, Tina Kuratashvili, piano (Pandora CD 634479829734, 2008).

album *The Russian Flute*, on the BIS label, is available through Naxos.<sup>131</sup> Sarah Bassingthwaighe is a flutist and composer based in Seattle, Washington.<sup>132</sup> Her 2008 album *Songs of the Caucasus*, on the Pandora label, is available through iTunes. The performance times for all five recordings are listed in Figure 23. Wiesler's timing is significantly longer than the others due to her very deliberate "*Lento*" tempo interpretation of the outer sections, but her middle section displays as much of the fiery "*Impetuoso*" character and tempo of the other recordings.

FLUTIST	PERFORMANCE TIME
Brian Luce (2008)	9:15
Dmitry Denisov (1994)	9:20
Alexandra Grot (2006)	9:25
Sarah Bassingthwaighe (2008)	9:30
Manuela Wiesler (2006)	10:40

**Figure 23:** Comparison of performance times for five recordings

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<sup>131</sup> "Manuela Wiesler," *Naxos Music Library*, [http://www.naxos.com/person/Manuela\\_Wiesler/808.htm](http://www.naxos.com/person/Manuela_Wiesler/808.htm) (accessed 30 March, 2013).

<sup>132</sup> "Sarah Bassingthwaighe, Flutist and Composer" <http://www.sarahbassingthwaighe.com/bio.html> (accessed 30 March, 2013).

## CONCLUSION

The *Sonata for Flute and Piano* (1960) by Edison Denisov not only fits into a fascinating period of Soviet music history, but it also provides a glimpse of a young musician in the midst of his search for his own compositional identity. Denisov is an example of a composer who successfully broke free from the confines of strictly regulated musical practices. This flute sonata is a representation of his creative mind at work in the early days of his experimentation as he strove to establish his individual style. Characterized by intriguing tertian relationships and rhythmic variety, Denisov's flute sonata displays a polystylistic collage of compositional devices newly available to the young composer. Though this work may never rise to the popularity level of other Russian/Soviet Republic compositions, such as Sergei Prokofiev's *Flute Sonata in D Major* (1942) or Otar Taktakishvili's *Flute Sonata* (1968), the lyrical and technical contrasts of Denisov's sonata, as well as its length of approximately 9-10 minutes, make it a viable option for a recital program or competition repertoire. It is my sincere wish that my analysis of this piece and the performance suggestions I supply will help the flutist who is first making his or her acquaintance with this sonata.

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## APPENDIX A: DENISOV'S COMPOSITIONS FEATURING FLUTE<sup>133</sup>

### CONCERTOS

WORK	DATE OF COMPOSITION	NOTES
<i>Concerto for Flute, Oboe, Piano, and Percussion</i>	1963	
<i>Concerto for Flute and Orchestra</i>	1975	Dedicated to Aurèle Nicolet
<i>Concerto for Flute, Oboe, and Orchestra</i>	1978	Dedicated to Aurèle Nicolet and Heinz Holliger
<i>Concerto for Flute, Vibraphone, Harpsichord, and Strings</i>	1993	
<i>Concerto for Flute, Harp, and Orchestra</i>	1994-1995	
<i>Concerto for Flute, Clarinet, and Orchestra</i>	1996	
Three cadenzas for Mozart's <i>Concerto for Flute and Harp</i>	1996	

### SOLO FLUTE

WORK	DATE OF COMPOSITION	NOTES
<i>Solo for Flute</i>	1971	Dedicated to Aurèle Nicolet
<i>Sonata for Solo Flute</i>	1982	
<i>Two Pieces for Solo Flute (Pastoral, Motion)</i>	1983	

### FLUTE AND PIANO

WORK	DATE OF COMPOSITION	NOTES
<i>Sonata for Flute and Piano</i>	1960	Dedicated to Alexander Kornayev
<i>Four Pieces for Flute and Piano</i>	1977	Dedicated to Aurèle Nicolet
<i>Prelude and Aria for flute and piano</i>	1978	

### FLUTE AND ANOTHER SOLO INSTRUMENT

WORK	DATE OF COMPOSITION	NOTES
<i>Sonata for Flute and Guitar</i>	1978	
<i>Sonata for Flute and Harp</i>	1983	
<i>Duet for Flute and Viola</i>	1985	
<i>Sonata for Two Flutes</i>	1996	
<i>Avant le coucher du soleil [Before Sunset]</i>	1996	For alto flute and vibraphone

<sup>133</sup> Kholopov and Tsenova, *Denisov* 2002, 302-317.

## FLUTE AND MULTIPLE INSTRUMENTS

WORK	DATE OF COMPOSITION	NOTES
<i>Music for Eleven Wind Instruments and Timpani</i>	1961	Instrumentation 1.2.2.2—1.2.1.0—Timp
<i>Silhouettes</i> for flute, two pianos, and percussion	1969	
<i>Quintet for Flute, Oboe, Clarinet, Bassoon, and Horn</i>	1969	
<i>Canon in Memory of Igor Stravinsky</i>	1971	For flute, clarinet, and harp
<i>Sextet for Flute, Oboe, Clarinet, Violin, Viola, and Cello</i>	1984	
<i>Hommage à Pierre</i> for chamber ensemble	1985	Dedicated to Pierre Boulez
<i>Quartet for Flute, Violin, Viola, and Cello</i>	1989	
<i>Variations on a Mozart Theme for Eight Flutes</i>	1990	Soloists at the 1991 Munich premiere: Andras Adorján, William Bennett, Michel Debost, Peter-Lukas Graf, Hiroshi Hari, Maxence Larrieu, Wolfgang Schulz, Ransom Wilson
<i>Dedication</i> for flute, clarinet, and string quartet	1991	Dedicated to the Nash Ensemble
<i>Sur la nappe d'un étang glace</i> for 9 instruments and tape	1991	
<i>Trio for Flute, Bassoon, and Piano</i>	1995	

## VOICE AND INSTRUMENTAL ENSEMBLE

WORK	DATE OF COMPOSITION	NOTES
<i>The Sun of the Incas</i> [Solntse inkov] for soprano and ensemble	1964	Dedicated to Pierre Boulez
<i>Italian Songs</i> [Italianskie pesni] for soprano, violin, flute, horn, and harpsichord	1964	On poems by Alexander Blok
<i>La vie en rouge</i> for voice, flute, clarinet, violin, cello, piano, and percussion	1973	On poems by Boris Vian
<i>Four Poems by Gérard de Nerval</i> for voice, flute, and piano	1989	
<i>Christmas Star</i> for voice, flute, and strings	1989	On poems by Boris Pasternak
<i>Archipel des songes</i> [Archipelago of dreams] for soprano, flute, vibraphone, and piano	1994	On poems by Jean Maheu

## APPENDIX B: PERMISSION LETTER

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January 15, 2013

Esther J. Waite  
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A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Hector Colón", written over a horizontal line.

Héctor Colón



New Music and Rights Department

## VITA

Esther June Waite is a native of upstate New York, where she began her flute studies with Charles Lady, Linda Price, and Melinda Easter. Educated at home, Esther played in the Greater Buffalo Youth Orchestra and the Southtowns Youth Orchestra during her high school years. She also performed with the Lake Effect Winds flute choir and the Chromatic Club of Buffalo. As a member of the Niagara Frontier Flute Association, Esther was awarded the Ida Christie Incentive Scholarship for her four years of college. She received her Bachelor of Science degree in Music Education in 2004 from Bob Jones University in Greenville, SC. She was a member of Amanda Barrett's flute studio, and for four years held the principal flute position in the BJU Symphony Orchestra.

Esther obtained a Master of Music degree in Flute Performance from the North Carolina School of the Arts (Winston-Salem, NC) in 2006. While studying with Dr. Tadeu Coelho, she served as a teaching assistant for the flute studio as well as for the undergraduate aural skills department. From 2006 to 2010, Esther was a flute instructor at Bob Jones University. She is a founding member of the South Carolina Flute Society and served on its Board of Directors for three years. She has coached ensembles for LSU's Chamber Winds Camp, taught at the Musica Piccola summer program in North Carolina, and presented an extended techniques workshop for Tadeu Coelho's Inspiration and Praise summer masterclass.

As a doctoral student of Dr. Katherine Kemler at Louisiana State University, Esther has held the teaching assistantship for the flute studio for three years. She plays in the LSU Symphony Orchestra, under the direction of Maestro Carlos Riazuelo, and has also performed with the Baton Rouge Symphony Orchestra and the Mississippi Symphony Orchestra. Upon her 2013 graduation from LSU with a Doctor of Musical Arts degree in Flute Performance, Esther will

return to her teaching position at Bob Jones University. Esther is a member of the Louisiana Flute Society, the National Flute Association, and Pi Kappa Lambda, the national music honor society.